

invaluable service to those who have sacrificed their safety for ours.

This 8,000-square-foot facility will provide the most basic necessity to those who cannot provide it for themselves, which is shelter. And when it comes to our veterans, Mr. Speaker, it is imperative that we encourage efforts like this and help those in need.

So, Chip, thank you and your company for putting your time and treasure to use to help others.

Mr. Speaker, times are tough and people are hurting. The greatness of the American spirit is that, even in those times, we still reach out to others who are in need.

So I am proud to call Chip Smith a constituent. I'm even prouder to call him my friend.

AMERICA IS NOT BROKE

The SPEAKER pro tempore. The Chair recognizes the gentleman from Connecticut (Mr. MURPHY) for 5 minutes.

Mr. MURPHY of Connecticut. Mr. Speaker and colleagues, America is not broke; so Republicans should stop saying it. Conservative pundits should stop spreading it, because this country isn't broke.

Now, our government temporarily is and millions of American families are, but our Nation is not. And my hypothesis is this: If we don't wake up to this fact soon, if we don't start investing our Nation's riches in spreading wealth out across this economy, then our whole economy is sunk whether you are rich or you are poor.

So, let's try to debunk this myth once and for all that America is broke, that we can't afford these investments.

And let's start here. It's pretty simple. The United States is still a global leader. We are still the richest country in the world on a per capita basis. For all the talk about the rise of India, China, and Brazil, if you take their population's adjusted wealth and combine it together, they are still 50 percent of U.S. wealth.

So if our country is still wealthy, we need to understand that we've made a choice to keep our government poor. Now, why is that? Contrary to popular belief, it's not because discretionary spending has run amok. Take a look at this chart. Discretionary spending has essentially remained stable over time. We've had a brief uptick with a couple of extraordinary pieces of legislation, but discretionary spending has remained stable.

Don't believe this chart? Take a look at this. If government is growing at extraordinary rates, you would expect for government employees to be growing at extraordinary rates as well. That's not true either. In fact, we have 16,000 less Federal employees than we did in 1970. And as you can see, the trendline just from 1990 continues to go down as well.

Now, this isn't all to say that government can't get leaner and meaner. It's

just a suggestion that there's another culprit at work, and that other culprit is revenue. Despite what you hear on TV, despite what you hear on Fox News today, taxes as a percentage of GDP today are at a 60-year low. Right now, we are collecting about 15 percent of our GDP in taxes. The problem isn't just that the government is broke; it's that we've made a decision, effectively, to keep it broke.

Now, if the government isn't broke and this country is still the richest in the world, why is it that so many families feel broke? Why is it so many families are broke?

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Let's explore that for a second. Here is the problem right here:

Over the last 60 years, incomes for the bottom 99 percent of Americans have basically remained flat. What that has meant is that all of the additional wealth that we've accumulated in this Nation has gone to the richest 1 percent as their incomes during that same time have increased by almost 300 percent.

Do you want to see it in even starker terms? Take a look at this chart.

The 400 wealthiest Americans have a net worth that is greater than the net worth of the 100 million poorest Americans. Let me say that again: the 400 richest of us have more money than the 100 million poorest of us.

Now, having said all of this, getting rich is good. It's great. The richest 400 people didn't steal this money. They made it legally. We just have to start having policies in this country that make more people rich, that make more people feel rich. So we need to be having a debate in this country right now about how we do that, about how we put policies in place to lift more people into the ranks of those who have enough to succeed because an economy with this kind of wealth disparity, combined with an unwillingness to make the investments to shrink it, is destined to collapse. This isn't about pitting one group against another. This is just about economics.

It's not class warfare to suggest that, as an economy, we'd be stronger if incomes were rising for a few more people than the top 1 percent—the people who tend to spend domestically, the middle class, rather than invest internationally.

It's not class warfare to suggest that our economy would be stronger if more of our Nation's wealth went to local innovators and small businesses rather than to big multinational companies that tend to take income from the United States and use it to create employment overseas.

It's not class warfare to suggest that our economy would be stronger if more kids had access to the ultimate wealth creator—higher education—if we were investing our Nation's riches in making college cheaper.

Do you know what? If we have this discussion, everybody, not just the bot-

tom 99 percent, benefits from the discussion.

My friends, the government is temporarily broke. Millions of American families are broke, but our Nation is not broke. We're just pretending that we are.

Here's the thing: If we don't wake up from this dream soon, what is fiction today will be fact before we know it.

IN HONOR OF AMERICA'S BRAVEST

The SPEAKER pro tempore. The Chair recognizes the gentleman from Texas (Mr. BRADY) for 5 minutes.

Mr. BRADY of Texas. Mr. Speaker, in having survived Hurricanes Rita and Ike, my district and the people of southeast Texas know and understand hurricanes and the devastation they can bring to our communities.

This past September, we dealt with a very different type of disaster in the form of major wildfires in the Counties of Jasper, Tyler, Trinity, Walker, and in my home county of Montgomery. Luckily for us, we were also granted our September miracle on Labor Day weekend as fire crews from across Texas—and, in fact, from the entire country—came to Magnolia to battle a three-county blaze that threatened to consume well over 10,000 homes and businesses in Magnolia, as well as thousands more in neighboring Grimes and Waller Counties.

In fact, if you look at this map, you can see the structures lost in Montgomery County were a fraction of the percentage of those saved by the brave fire crews. The fire was in this area outlined here, but you can see from the red, the yellow, the green, and the blue going out all the thousands of homes and small businesses which were saved because of the actions of our local firefighters.

I had the privilege to go up twice to those fire areas to see for myself how the fire lines came right up to these homes—within 5 feet of their front doors. Somehow our firefighters saved them, and then they did it to the homes next to them and to the homes next to those. It is impossible for me and for anyone who could see that not to be in awe of these heroes. Their skill and dedication saved the town of Magnolia, and I can't wait to join them this Saturday in Unity Park to honor their success and their hard work.

Chief Gary Vincent led the Magnolia Volunteer Firefighters and exemplified their motto: a community of unity. Gary united over 100 different firefighting agencies by his side. The chief also had help from our dedicated sheriff, Tommy Gage, and his deputies; our constables; our police departments; our terrific fire marshal, Jimmy Williams, who you need to meet; our school districts; and the Texas Forest Service—just to name a few of the people and agencies that stepped up like you can't believe.

California sent from the Federal Government the Interagency Incident Management Team, and I think they had